The USAID Notice Process: Creating, Clearing, and Sending Agency Notices

A Mandatory Reference for ADS Chapter 504

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**This reference has been revised in its entirety.*

The USAID Notice Process: Creating, Clearing, and Sending Agency Notices

I. The Notice Database on the USAID Intranet

Effective Date: 05/31/2001

USAID/W and Mission employees with access to the intranet can read and download Notices and attachments. If you have access to the USAID intranet, go to **http://inside.usaid.gov/** and a link to Agency Notices can be found under "**Notices and News**". Agency Notices from 2000 through the current year are housed on this site. (When space becomes an issue, the Bureau for Management, Office of Information Resources Management, Enabling Technologies & Integration, Web Services (M/IRM/ETI/WS) will remove the oldest Notices from the intranet).

Only the Bureau for Management, Office of Administrative Services, Information Records Division (M/AS/IRD) has the authority to add, delete, or change Notices that appear on this system. (See section VI.b of this document for information on submitting a Notice for posting.) M/AS/IRD posts new Agency Notices to this database at the end of every business day. If you encounter technical problems accessing the Notice database, contact the IRM Help Desk for USAID/W, or, if you are at a Mission, contact your Mission systems administrator.

This database is a text (.txt) database. Therefore, all Notices must be submitted to M/AS/IRD as text files; attachments, however, may be in almost any format but must be **Section 508** compliant. (See section III.a of this document for more information.)

Notice Sender (M.AS.IRD) mailbox

The Notice Sender mailbox only distributes e-mail. It is not configured to receive e-mail. Do not send e-mail to this mailbox.

Send questions about Notices to **Notice Mailbox (M.AS.IRD)**. The e-mail address is nmailbox@usaid.gov.

II. Two Ways to Create a Notice

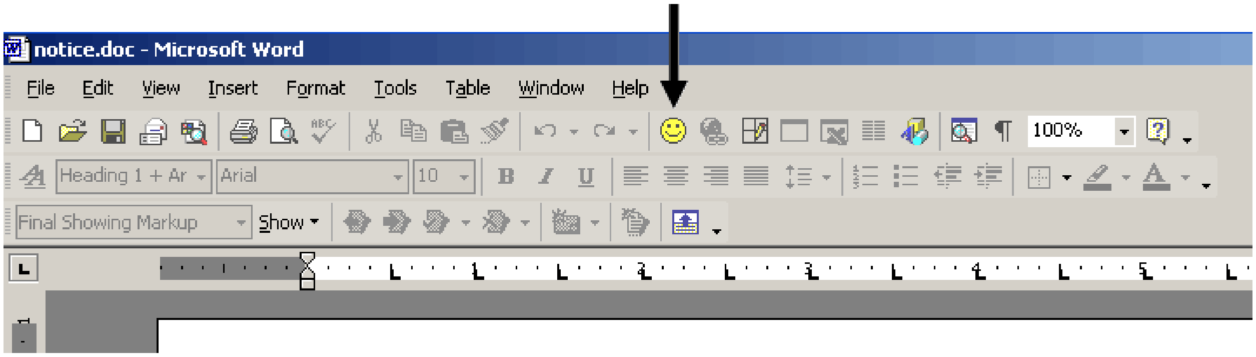
Effective Date: 03/12/2003

Create an Agency Notice either by using the Agency Notice Macro Form or by creating it yourself in MS Word. (If your Notice requires special formatting, see the Special Formatting text box (on page five of this document) that describes how to create a cover Notice.) Both options require that you save your Notice as a text file and send it to your Authorized Notice Sender, who then sends it to Notice Mailbox for distribution.

Option 1 – Using the Notice Macro. The Agency Notice Macro Form is available on the Agency's intranet Forms page. For help with downloading and using the Notice Macro Form, see the mandatory reference document, **Instructions for Creating a Notice with the Macro Form**.

The Notice Macro Form ensures that you create the Notice in the proper format. In fact, it does most of the actual formatting for you. However, even if you use the Notice Macro Form, read information about the required format in the next section so that you can format the body of the Notice correctly.

Finally, in order to create a text file from the Notice Macro, you must click on the **smiley face icon**, which is located on the Toolbar (see the image below). Once you click on the smiley face, all Word formatting and special features (bold, underline, hyperlinks, etc.) will be removed from the document, and the macro generates the text file that you need to send to your Authorized Notice Sender.


notice.doc - Microsoft Word
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Window Help
100%
Heading 1 + Ar
Arial
10
Final Showing Markup
Show

M/AS/IRD does not accept Notices in macro format. If you do not complete the macro by clicking on the smiley face icon, then it will not convert to a text (.txt) file. M/AS/IRD will return the Notice macro to your Authorized Notice Sender for proper completion, which may delay the release of your Notice.

Option 2 – Creating the Notice Yourself. You may create a Notice with MS Word in Courier New 10 pt. font. The Notice must be saved as a text file and adhere to the formatting requirements as described in the next section. (The mandatory reference, **Instructions for Creating a Notice Without the Macro Form**, will guide you when creating Notices without the macro.)

III. Required Notice Format

Effective Date: 11/08/2005

When creating a Notice, you must adhere to the format described in this section. The Notice format is presented graphically in the **Sample Agency Notice**.

a. Format. Be sure to type your Notice in Word, using Courier New font, sized at 10 point. Also, be sure to set your margins at one inch, top and bottom, and .92 for the left margin and 1.92 for the right margin.

Special Formatting

If you need to include special formatting features in your Notice, you must create a cover Notice following the format rules and your document becomes an attachment to your cover Notice. If your Notice is longer than five pages, M/AS/IRD encourages you to create a cover Notice. See section III.b of this reference for more information.

Unacceptable Formatting Features for a Notice. Save your Notices as a text (.txt) document. Saving it as a .txt file will strip the document of most formatting features. *All unacceptable formatting will be stripped from your document.*

UNACCEPTABLE FORMATTING FEATURES FOR TEXT NOTICES		
Indents	Bold, underlining, and italics	Bullets and special characters
Tab sets	Center, right, or full justification	Automatic numbering and lettering
Tables, columns, charts, and graphics	Page numbers	Font changes and special font attributes
Hard returns at the end of each line within a paragraph	Footnotes and endnotes	Headers and footers
Hyperlinks	Color	Animation

(Note: You may use these features only when creating *attachments* for Notices.)

Attachments must be compliant with the accessibility requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. If your Notice attachment has a graph or chart in it, you must include a text description of the graph or chart. If your attachment is a PowerPoint presentation, you must send the text of your presentation to M/AS/IRD. **(See Mandatory References, 36 CFR 1194 and USAID-Federal Regulations for Web Accessibility)**

The attachment may be the following kinds of files:

Word (.doc)
Excel (.xls)
PowerPoint (.ppt)
Hypertext mark-up language (.html or .htm)
rich text format (.rtf)
text (.txt)
zipped (.zip)
Portable Document Format (.pdf)
WordPerfect (.wp6 or .wpd)

b. Cover Notices. Specially formatted Notices and lengthy Notices must be saved as attachments and a text cover Notice must be created. If your Notice requires special formatting, create a text cover Notice for your specially formatted Notice. Your specially formatted Notice becomes your attachment. The text file, with the attachment attached, will be posted to the Notices database system.

See the additional help document, **Sample Agency Notice**, for an example of a correctly formatted Notice.

c. Audience. Place the *audience* (USAID/W or USAID/General Notice) on the top line in the far right corner of the page. (See 504.3.1.1 for information on the different audiences.)

d. Category. In all capital letters, include one of the nine Notice *categories* on the second line, in the center of the page. (See **Notice Categories**, Attachment A, at the end of this document, for information on categories.) These are the nine Notice categories:

- ADMINISTRATOR
- EXECUTIVE MESSAGE
- POLICY
- POLICY – REMINDER
- PERSONNEL
- INFORMATION
- TRAINING
- INFORMATION – AFGE
- INFORMATION – AFSA

Mark Notices from either union (American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) or American Foreign Service Association (AFSA)) with the union name next to the category, Information. For example, a Notice from AFSA would be "INFORMATION – AFSA."

e. Office Symbol. Every Notice must state from which Bureau/Office/Mission the Notice originates, i.e., the office symbol. Insert the Bureau/Office/Mission symbol on the second line in the far right corner of the page (right below the audience line).

f. Date. On the third line, place the *date* underneath the office symbol. Indicate the month and day with two digits and the year with four digits (dd/mm/yyyy), i.e., 11/08/2005, not 1/15/01.

***g. Subject.** Place the *subject* of the Notice on the fifth line along the left margin. We recommend that the subject be no more than two lines long. **Please add any important dates, such as deadlines/due dates, or action required by, to the subject line of the Notice.**

Additionally, when issuing a Policy Notice or Policy-Reminder General Notice, cite the appropriate ADS Chapter number(s) or mandatory reference title(s) that the policy/procedures are referenced or where the ADS Author is going to incorporate the new or revised material.

h. Body. Begin the *body* of the Notice two lines below the subject line.

i. Point of Contact. Every Notice must list a point-of-contact. The point of contact section must include a name, office symbol, and phone number or e-mail address. Always include the area code with phone numbers, i.e., (202) 712-1234. Do not use references to internal shortcuts (e.g., 2-xxxx) to indicate phone numbers.

j. Notice length. M/AS/IRD recommends that Notices be no longer than five pages. If you have more than five pages of information, we encourage you to make your lengthy Notice an attachment. Then create a brief cover notice for your attachment and then send both files to your Authorized Notice Sender.

k. Section 508. Notices and attachments must be compliant with the accessibility requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. If they are not, M/AS/IRD will return them to the Authorized Notice Sender for correction. (See Mandatory References, **The ADS Process – Part 1 C.2**, Section 508 Format Requirements, **36 CFR 1194**, and **USAID-Federal Regulations for Web Accessibility**.)

l. Tables. In accordance with Section 508 accessibility requirements, do not use a "tab table" to present information. Use MS Word's table format to create a table, and include it as an attachment to the Notice. (See Mandatory References, **36 CFR 1194** and **USAID-Federal Regulations for Web Accessibility**.)

m. Web and E-mail Addresses.

- Hyperlinks do not work in text files. Therefore, they will not work in the text (.txt) Notice that you send to Notice Mailbox. If you want your document to have live hyperlinks, include them in a non-text attachment.

- For text (.txt) files, do not enclose web addresses or e-mail addresses in "greater than" and "less than" signs (< and >). If you do, the system will delete the web address from the document.

- If you are providing web addresses in the Notice, type the complete web or e-mail address in the Notice so that readers can copy and paste it into their web browser. When including hyperlinks in the attachment, type the complete web or e-mail address in the document. For example, **http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads** or **ads@usaid.gov**. This allows readers of the document to hyperlink to the web site.

- **USAID** intranet web addresses must include the following disclaimer statement: "Only Agency employees with intranet access may view this web site."

n. Converting cables. Create a cover Notice for your cable, or convert the text of the cable to sentence capitalization and put it in Notice format.

IV. Obtain Required Clearances

Effective Date: 05/31/2001

Once you have completed the text for your Notice, you must obtain any required clearances for the Notice before sending it to your Authorized Notice Sender. Observe the following requirements:

- All Notices must be approved through established internal procedures specific to each Bureau/Office/Mission. Bureaus/Offices/Missions establish their own internal office policy and procedures for clearing Notices. To learn more about your Bureau/Office/Mission's internal Notice procedures, contact your Authorized Notice Sender. (M/AS/IRD maintains a list of Authorized Notice Senders – see the Mandatory Reference, **Authorized Notice Senders for Agency Notices**.)

- Before submitting a Policy Notice to your Authorized Notice Sender, contact M/AS/IRD by sending an e-mail to **ads@usaid.gov**. All policy must be incorporated into the ADS. Therefore, the ADS clearance and issuance process must be adhered to when you wish to issue a policy Notice.

  (See **ADS 501.3.4** and **ADS 501.3.5** for information on the ADS clearance and issuance processes)

- All Operating Expense (OE)-funded, internationally recruited U.S. Personal Service Contractor (USPSC) announcements must include a copy of the DAA/M/HR's approval to advertise with their submission of the Notice to M/AS/IRD as evidence of M/HR's prior approval. M/AS/IRD will not distribute the announcements without this evidence. (The appropriate geographic Bureau/Office/Mission may forward, via their Authorized Notice Sender, program-funded USPSC announcements to Notice Mailbox for distribution.)

V. Send the Notice to Your Authorized Notice Sender

Effective Date: 05/31/2001

Once you have obtained authorization for your completed Notice, send it to the Authorized Notice Sender for your Bureau/Office. The list of Authorized Notice Senders is included in the Mandatory Reference, **Authorized Notice Senders for Agency Notices**. M/AS/IRD will only publish Notices sent to **nmailbox@usaid.gov** by the Authorized Notice Senders.

VI. What Does the Authorized Notice Sender Do?

Effective Date: 05/31/2001

a. Format, Authorization, and Content Review: When Authorized Notice Senders receive a Notice from an employee in their Bureau/Office/Mission, they first must review the Notice for proper format, clearance, and content. If M/AS/IRD receives a Notice in improper format, M/AS/IRD will **return the Notice** to the Authorized Notice Sender **for correction**.

M/AS/IRD cannot stress enough to Authorized Notice Senders, please read the Notice before you forward it to Notice Mailbox (M.AS.IRD). As an Authorized Notice Sender, you must review the Notice to ensure that it is in the proper format:

Check for the following items:

Are You on the Right Path with Notices?[1]		
→→ Completeness		
→→Descriptive subject	→→ Correct audience	→→ Completed macro
→→ Font size	→→ Notice type	→→ Live hyperlinks in attachment only
→→ Correct margins	→→ Office symbol	→→ Cables in initial capitals only
→→ Point-of-Contact	→→ Correct date	→→ A completed 3-252 if it is a policy Notice

Ensure that the Notice macro is completed. **IF** the macro is completed, you should be sending the Notice shop a text file and if applicable, an attachment for the Notice. If M/AS/IRD receives a macro instead of a text file, the macro will be returned to the Authorized Notice Sender for processing. M/AS/IRD posts only text files and their attachments to the Notices database.

- **Authorization.** As an Authorized Notice Sender, you must make sure the Notice has received the appropriate internal authorizations, if applicable, and adheres to the ADS process (if it is a Policy Notice).

- **Content.** As an Authorized Notice Sender, you must read the Notice to check for spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, incomplete information, incorrect dates, and other errors.

b. Send the Notice to Notice Mailbox (nmailbox@usaid.gov): Once you, the Authorized Notice Sender, have a well-written Notice in the proper format, send the Notice and any attachments via e-mail to Notice Mailbox (M.AS.IRD). You can send e-mails to Notice Mailbox by typing "Notice Mailbox (M.AS.IRD)" into the Global Address List in MS Outlook. Alternatively, you may type "nmailbox@usaid.gov".

c. Deadlines: **Notices received in Notice Mailbox by 3:30 p.m. will be processed, issued, and posted the same business day.** Notices received after 3:30 p.m. will be processed, issued, and posted the following evening.

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[1] Please ensure that the Notice and attachments are **Section 508** compliant.

d. Time-sensitive Notices: If you need additional time to send a Notice to the Notice Shop, you must call (202-289-6455) and let the Notice staff know you need additional time. This additional time is **only for time-sensitive Notices. All other Notices received after 3:30 p.m. will be released the next evening.**

e. Out of Office Assistance Feature: M/AS/IRD encourages all Authorized Notice Senders to use Outlook's Out of Office Assistance feature when they are going to be out of the Office. This Outlook feature will let people know that you are out of the office and direct them to other Bureau/Office Authorized Notice Senders. This action will prevent Notices from waiting in your inbox until you return to the office. The Notice author can then send his or her Notice to another Authorized Notice Sender in that Bureau or Office.

Designating Authorized Notice Senders

Each Bureau or Office must designate at least two people to be Authorized Notice Senders.

- ✓ M/AS/IRD encourages Bureaus and Offices to limit the number of Authorized Notice Senders to five.
- ✓ The Bureau Assistant Administrator or the Office Director or Division Chief must let M/AS/IRD know when a new person is delegated as an Authorized Sender for their Bureau/Office or when to remove Authorized Notice Senders from the list.

Send your e-mail to nmailbox@usaid.gov.

VII. Executive Messages

Effective Date: 05/31/2001

Executive Messages are extremely time-sensitive Notices. They contain information that must be received by Notice recipients in less than 24 hours and, therefore, cannot wait for the daily e-mail distribution and posting to the intranet.

ONLY designated Authorized Notice Senders from **M/AA, LPA, M/MPPA** or **ES** and **M/AS/IRD** may distribute Executive Messages.

If you have a message that you think should be distributed as an Executive Message, you must create the message in the Agency Notice format. Then, contact M/AA, LPA, M/MPPA or ES to request distribution. If you can't reach one of them, contact M/AS/IRD (202-289-6455). M/AS/IRD serves as a backup.

Executive Messages are sent from a mailbox called *Executive Message*. The e-mails are distributed to the same addressees as Agency Notices.

Note: The Executive Message mailbox only distributes e-mail. It does not receive e-mail. Do not send e-mail to this mailbox. Send your e-mails to **nmailbox@usaid.gov**

M/AS/IRD also posts Executive Messages to the Notices database on the intranet that evening with a note about their prior distribution. Additionally, M/AS/IRD attaches it to the nightly e-mail from Notice Sender that is sent to the Missions.

ATTACHMENT A

NOTICE CATEGORIES

Revised 11/21/2005

There are **nine** different Agency Notice categories. You must identify all USAID/W and USAID/General Notices as one of the following categories:

1. ADMINISTRATOR. Information to the Agency from the Administrator's Office.

Only the Office of the Executive Secretariat (ES) may send this type of Notice to M/AS/IRD for distribution or issue it themselves as an Executive Message.

2. EXECUTIVE MESSAGE. A time-sensitive, critical Notice that must be issued ASAP. (See **504.3.5** for information on Executive Messages.)

3. POLICY. New, revised, or cancelled Agency policy directives and required procedures. Policy Notices are always distributed as USAID/*General* Notices. All Policy Notices and Policy Cables must adhere to the following policy directives and required procedures:

- Before submitting a policy Notice to your Authorized Notice Sender, contact M/AS/IRD by sending an e-mail to **ADS@USAID.gov**. All policy must be incorporated into the ADS. Therefore, the ADS clearance and issuance process must be adhered to when you wish to issue policy via a policy Notice. M/AS/IRD **must receive a completed** USAID Directives Issuance Request Form **AID 3-252** **and supporting documentation from the author** before a Policy Notice is issued. (See ADS 501.3.4 and 501.3.5)
- You must state (in the subject line or immediately below the subject line, as the first item in the body of the Notice) which ADS chapter the policy will become part of, if applicable, **or provide an effective date or an expiration date.**

Note regarding Cables and Telegrams
The USAID Policy Cable must receive ADS clearance before being issued. (See **ADS 549.5.2** and **501.3.3**) Additionally, policy issued via telegram must be issued by a USAID/General Policy Notice.

- They must be codified in the ADS if they are not already in ADS chapter or reference format. If you issue a Policy Notice, you must either incorporate the material into to an ADS chapter or reference, or have it expire on a specified date. One of these options should occur by the next annual ADS certification (an internal audit) or within **one year** after the Policy Notice is first issued. (See **The ADS Process, Part III, Section 6**)

Interim Updates (IU) are Policy Notices of short duration that are formatted as IUs and placed on the ADS web site and CD. Each year management officials must certify that their Interim Updates (IUs) are still valid (see **501.3.6**, Annual ADS Certification). Please e-mail the ADS Directives Shop at **ADS@USAID.gov** if you have questions regarding policy.

M/AS/IRD encourages you to send your draft Policy Notices to the Directives Shop for review.

4. POLICY- REMINDER. Reminder of existing policy directives and required procedures. ADS clearance is not required. You must state in the first line of the Notice where in the ADS the reader can find the policy (cite chapter number or reference title).

5. PERSONNEL. Any type of vacancy or internship announcement issued by a Bureau/Office, or on behalf of a Mission. If M/HR's Authorized Notice Senders do not combine the Merit Notice Announcements into one Notice attachment, M/AS/IRD will combine the Announcements into one Notice.

The Bureau for Management, Office of Human Resources (M/HR) also generates Notices that concern other personnel issues (e.g., assignment review boards, vacancy announcements, Foreign Service assignments, Merit Promotion Information, Holidays, and donating leave).

U.S. Personal Service Contractor (USPSC) Notices
The Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Human Resources, Management Bureau, must review all Operating Expense (OE)-funded, internationally recruited USPSC announcements. You must include a copy of the Deputy Assistant Administrator's approval to advertise with the submission of the Notice to M/AS/IRD as evidence of M/HR's prior approval.

Do not use the category "Personnel" to distribute policy directives or required procedures.

6. *Information. Internal USAID information that is of general employee-relations interest (e.g., brown bag lunches, film presentations, awards and ceremonies, Combined Federal Campaign, death of an Agency employee or immediate family member (spouse, child, or parent)).

Information Notices exclude non-USAID-sponsored or -endorsed activities. There is one exception: the occasional Department of State Information Notice, which must have a USAID point of contact and be sent to the M/AS/IRD Notice Shop by a USAID Authorized Notice Sender. The following are additional mandatory rules for Information Notices. Please note the new procedures for Items 1 and 2, take effect November 14, 2005:

*1) **Out-of-Office/Leave-of-Absence Notices.** These are limited to the Administrator (A/AID), Deputy Administrator (DA/AID), and Assistant Administrators (AAs), Chief Acquisition Officer/Procurement Executive (CAO/PE), Chief Financial Office (CFO), Chief Information Offices (CIO), and the Director of Human Resources only. Information Notices may no longer be used to announce when a DAA, Director, or Division Chief are out of the office.

*2) **Office Designation Notices.** This category is limited. It is used only to announce appointments of Division Chiefs and higher to the appropriate Bureau/Office. Office Designation Notices may also be used to announce the appointments of Mission Directors.

As of November 14, 2005, the announcement of Division Chiefs and Directors on TDY or leave is prohibited. The Notice System will no longer process these types of Notices. Please send them to your Administrative Services (AMS) Officer for internal distribution.

3) **Death Announcements.** These are limited to Agency employees and their spouses, children, and parents.

4) **Reminder Notices.** When possible, state just the facts and do not repeat the original Notice. Keep reminder Notices brief and whenever possible, only state pertinent information.

5) **Retirement Notices and Farewell Parties.** Only the Administrator may issue these. You may distribute other retirement and farewell announcements through your Bureau/Office Administrative Management Staff (AMS).

Do not use the category "Information" to distribute policy directives or required procedures.

7. TRAINING. Training offered by or to the Agency (e.g., ADS Training, CTO Certification, etc.)

8. INFORMATION – AFSA. This is an informational Notice regarding activities within the union and must be marked with the union name next to the category.

9. INFORMATION – AFGE. This is an informational Notice regarding activities within the union and must be marked with the union name next to the category.

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